

TRUXTON KING

A STORY OF GRAUSTARK

GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

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Synopsis of Chapters Already Published

Truxton King, a wealthy New Yorker, goes to Graustark, a seething nation, to meet Olga, his fiancée, an aristocrat. The members of her group think he is a spy sent from the United States to assassinate the king. John Tullis, an American, guardian of the boy king, loves the young queen of Count Marlowe, a court official, who had been exiled and is responsible for the assassination of the king. The Countess tells Tullis she suspects the count of plotting against the king. King and a look-alike agent go to a witch's hut, where King sees a mysterious figure. The countess has disappeared, and when Tullis insists on searching for her instead of King, Vos Enjo volunteers to lead a party to rescue King.

The party that went in search of Truxton King found no trace of him. King is taken and brought back to Edelweiss and through an underground passage to the house, where he is told he is to die. He hears the conspirators discuss his own death, and learns that a trap has been laid for him.

While King awaits his fate another prisoner—Lorraine, the princess who is brought in a prisoner and the two relate their experiences and plot. Lorraine unbids King's hands, and is horrified when he tells her of the plot to kill the prince.

When Julius Spantz comes after Lorraine, King tells her, takes his gun and kills the man who is to be taken away. As they land he finds Lorraine covered with two cartridges and a revolver.

They are pursued through darkness and storm, and finally escape to the castle in an empty car on the outskirts of the city.

The day preceding that fixed for the assassination of the prince fake reports of riots and uprisings were made to draw the soldiers from Edelweiss.

The city filled with ruffians and plans were made for the final blow at the government.

The car in which King and Lorraine sought safety was taken away from the palace and taken away a fact which again for the conspirators learned with much pleasure.

Some distance out of Edelweiss they escape from the car and enter a farm to rest. King reaches Edelweiss just as Olga prepares to hurl the bomb at the prince. She throws it with indecision, and the prince is saved.

King, the prince and Lorraine and many of the royal reach the castle safely, but are virtually prisoners. The count has overthrown army and police. The Iron Count turns against the conspirators and seeks to gain the throne for himself.

Mariank, the Iron Count, arrests and orders the arrest of the conspirators, while plans in the castle are being made to rescue John Tullis, who is still outside the city.

The Iron Count sends an ultimatum to the castle demanding the surrender of Prince Robin, which is refused.

Count Vos Enjo, himself in love with Lorraine, orders the castle to be taken, where the king is staying.

When all others have fled, King says he will go and fight. He tells Lorraine that she is to be his wife.

The prince sends for King, who learns that Lorraine is greatly worried about his perilous journey.

King and Hobbs find Tullis and warn him of the danger he is in.

Before King and Tullis, with the army, can get through the city gates, the Iron Count starts to bombard the castle.

The Countess, who reaches the headquarters of John Tullis' army and tells of her plans.

King returns to the castle at night to arrange for a double attack on the enemy, and learns that his rival has saved Lorraine's life.

The Iron Count's forces attack the castle and are on the verge of victory, when Tullis arrives with his army.

CHAPTER XXII (Cont'd.)

"I LOVE you—oh, I love you, Truxton!" she cried over and over again. He was faint with joy.

His kisses spoke the adoration he would have cried out to her if emotion had not choked his throat.

"Eric!" she whispered at last, drawing back in his arms and looking up into his eyes with a great pity in her own. "Is he—his dead, Truxton?"

"No," he said gently. "Badly hurt, but—"

"He will not die? Thank God, Truxton. He is a brave—oh, a very brave man." Then she remembered her mission into this whirlpool of danger.

"Don't lose a moment, darling! Tell Colonel Quinnox that Jack has come! The dragons are—"

He did not hear the end of her cry. A quick, fierce kiss and he was gone, bounding down the stairs with great shouts of encouragement.

Leaderless, between the deadly fires, the mercenaries gave up the fight after a brief stand at the castle walls. Hundreds of men lay on beds of suffering, crushed and bleeding from the wounds they had courted and received.

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sudden shyness leaped into her eyes, and she looked away.

"Lorraine, have you told him?"

"Yes, I am so sorry for him. He is one of the bravest men I have ever known. Truxton dear, and as it is with all men of his race, love knew no reason, no compromise. But I have made him see that I cannot be his wife. He knows that I love you."

"Somehow, darling, I'm sorry for him."

"He will not pretend friendship for you, dear," she went on painfully. "He is too honest to thank you and to apologize, as you did, not so long ago. And he wants to ask you to release him from a certain obligation."

"Yes, he is to lose his right arm, Truxton. You understand how it is with him now."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"YOU WILL BE MRS. KING."

LATE that night it was reported at the castle that a large force of men were encamped on the opposite side of the river. A hundred campfires were gleaming against the distant upland.

"The grand Duke Paulus," exclaimed Count Halfont. "Thank God he did not come a day earlier. We owe him nothing but yesterday! Ah, he could have demanded much of us. Send his messengers to me, Colonel Quinnox, as soon as they arrive in the morning. I will arise early. There is much to do in Graustark. Let there be no slugs."

A yellow, smiling moon crept up over the hills, flooding the land with a serene radiance. Once more the windows in the castle gleamed brightly; low-voiced people strolled through the shattered balconies; others wandered about the vast halls, possessed by uncertain emotions, torn by the conflicting hands of joy and gloom. In a score of rooms wounded men were lying; in others there were dead heroes. At the barracks, standing fully against the distant shadows, there were many cots of soldiers, even among those who writhed in pain or bowed their heads in grief. Victory's wings were fanning the gloom away; conquest was painting an ever-widening streak of brightness across the dark, dreary landscape.

In one of the wrecked approaches to the terrace, surrounded by fragments of stone and confronted by ugly destruction, sat a young man and a slender girl. There were no lights near them; the shadows were black and forbidding. This particular end of the terrace had suffered most in the fierce rain of cannonballs. So great was the devastation that the couple could only be seen by the light of the stars and the moon.

"What a lovely night," said the girl, looking up at the stars. "I wish I could stay here forever. It is so peaceful, so beautiful."

"I am sure of it," he agreed. "I saw him talking with her and the Duke of Perse as I came out a while ago. They were going to the duke's rooms up there. The duke will offer me a commission in his army. I shall be a lieutenant."

"How could he have given her that?" she asked. "He is so kind, so generous."

"He is a very good man," she said. "I wish I could be like him. I wish I could be a part of his life."

"You will never, never know, how happy I am, Lorraine!" he breathed into her hair.

"I hope I shall always bring happiness to you, Truxton," she murmured, faint with the joy of loving.

"You will make me very unhappy if you do not marry me tomorrow."

"I don't ask you to think. If you do, you may change your mind completely. Just marry me without thinking clear."

"I will marry you, Truxton, when we get to New York," she said, but not very firmly. He saw his advantage.

"But, my dear, I'm tired of traveling. It was rather enigmatic. What has that to do with it?" she asked.

"Well, it's this way: If we get married in New York we'll have to consider an extended and wholly obligatory wedding journey. If we get married here, we can save all that bother by bridally tripping to New York instead of away from it. And, what's more, we'll escape the rice throwing and the old shoes and the hand-painted trunk labels. Greater still: we will avoid a long and lonely trip across the ocean on separate steamers. That's something, you know."

"We could go on the same steamer," she said. "I don't see how it could be any better than getting married."

"I hate a man who is always trying to save money," he said. "I'll promise never to save a cent. I'm a miser so, my dear. But don't you think it would be nice if we went as one instead of two?"

"I suppose it would be cheaper," she said. "The grand fellow saves money by getting married."

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"They can't be married for—oh, ever so long," she said very primly.

"No, indeed," he said with alacrity. But he did not believe what he said. It would not be "ever so long" before Prince Robin's friend turned Benedict and husband to the most noted beauty in all Graustark.

"I shall be sorry to leave Graustark," she said dreamily, after a period of silent retrospection. "I've had the happiest year of my life here."

"I've had the busiest month of my life here," he said. "I'll never again say that the world is a dull place and I'll never advise any man to go out of his own home city in search of the most adorable woman in the world. She's always there, bless her heart, if he'll only look around a bit for her."

"But you wouldn't have found me if you hadn't come to Graustark," he said. "I shudder when I think of what might have happened to you, my Princess Sweetheart, if I hadn't come to Edelweiss. No, I would not have found you. Feeling her tremble in his arms, he went on with whimsical good humor: 'You would have been eaten up by the ogre long before this. Or, perhaps, you would have succeeded in becoming a countess.'"

"At this, I shall be a baroness," he said. "In Graustark, but not in New York. That reminds me. You'll be more than a baroness—more than a princess. You will be a queen. Don't you catch the point? You will be Mrs. King."

The grand Duke Paulus distinctly smiled. He had traveled many miles, endured quite a number of hardships, and all to no purpose. When he came his countryman returned from the city with the lamentable information that the government had refused itself this marriage. He was a revolution was at an end, and that the regents would be highly honored if he would return to his country. He was a revolution was at an end, and that the regents would be highly honored if he would return to his country.

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